SPEECH

OF

HON. CHAUNCEY F. CLEVELAND, OF CONNECTICUT,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 19, 1850,

In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the President's Message transmitting the Constitution of California.

Mr. CLEVELAND said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At this late period of a most excited and exciting debate, I have obtained the floor; and, being by a rule of this House, of which I confess myself unable to comprehend the propriety, restricted to a single hour, I desire at the outset to remark, that I cannot consent to be deprived of a moment of that time, as I have necessarily much to say upon a subject which has agitated, and is still agitating, the public mind.

Why, sir, is it that we have already been here more than four months, at an expense to the nation of about one million of dollars, without so much, even, as *commencing* the necessary legislation for which we were sent? Why is it that so much of time and treasure has been *wasted*? These are questions asked by the thinking and right-minded men of this country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Will it be said, sir, that it is because one section is insisting upon the extension of the ordinance of 1787 to our newly-acquired territory, where the institution of slavery does not exist; or, that they are attempting to ingraft a *new* principle upon the *Constitution*, and that a determined resistance on the part of the other to this act, forms good ground of justification for our long delay? I think not. That principle is older than the Constitution itself, and has been quietly acquiesced in down to the administration of the late President Polk, and by him approved. What is it, then? Simply a struggle for sectional, political power, and that power based upon human chattel slavery. *Strange* this to the friends of human freedom throughout the world! Yet is it no more strange than true. Yes, sir; in the middle of the nineteenth century—in the United States of America—the land of Washington, Warren, Jefferson, and their compatriots—the land that was so freely watered by the blood of the soldiers of the Revolution,—in this land, where, if upon any portion of our moving ball, the oppressed and spirit-broken of earth's sons should find a secure and happy refuge, the great question of the day is, Shall slavery or freedom be the controlling element of our Government? And this question is mooted not only in Congress, but out of it, absorbing all others, regardless of all consequences, and refusing, even, to be controlled by that potent power, *party organization*.

For full fifty years the slaveholders' influence has been the controlling power in this professedly *free* Government; and yet, notwithstanding all the advantages derived from this long and almost undisputed sway, such are its blighting effects, such the curse which it entails upon the soil where it exists, such the paralyzing influence exerted upon the energies of those who uphold or live by it, that it finds itself distanced in the race for wealth and power, (where power is to depend upon numbers,) and in its dying struggles to retain the truncheon of command it has so long wielded, it boldly comes forward now, and demands that the *free* territory of this Republic shall be given up for the avowed purpose of perpetuating human bondage, and claims that the Constitution shall be amended for the sole purpose of allowing this institution, which fears not God nor regards the rights of man, to control through all coming time, a Government which extends from ocean to ocean, and may yet, as I believe, or hope, find no limit on this continent between the poles, but the ice-reared barrier which nature's God has set—a Government originally established for the purpose of protecting man in his God-given rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The question now is, *shall* or shall *not* this be? The issue is made up—is now to be tried, and we are the jurors. Allow me to ask, sir, whether any of us here realize our position and the consequences of our several verdicts, which we are to render by our acts? Are we aware that if the friends of human liberty now falter, they surrender to the blasting curse of slavery millions of acres of free soil, place beyond the hope of escape or redemption, millions of human beings whose hearts can beat for freedom, and whose flesh can feel the tortures of the tyrant's lash as well as ours? Shall we give our verdict against freedom? Humanity answers, No! Our countrymen, by whose authority we are here, answer, No! Our consciences whisper to the mind's ear, No! And if we do this damning deed, what traitor who ever sold his country—her hopes and liberty—for revenge, for gold, or office, whose sin would not *whiten* by comparison with ours? Let no man deceive himself in this matter. His vote upon this subject will live the life of this Republic, and will descend to his children, an imperishable record of honor or shame.

As one of the soldiers in this battle, I protest against a base surrender of the rights of freedom. I do it, sir, for my constituents, my State, myself—for seventeen millions of human beings who have no interest in the extension of slavery, and for three millions of beings fashioned in the image of their Creator, who are held in cruel, crushing bondage. This, sir, is a contest between seventeen millions of free people and three millions of slaves on the one side, and less than five hundred

thousand slaveholders on the other; for I will venture the assertion that there are not in this Union five hundred thousand persons holding property in slaves. The manner in which these latter have exercised a controlling influence in the Government hitherto, you are familiar with. The process by which they now propose to ingraft this new feature of their design of obtaining free territory for the use of slaveholders, upon the policy of our Government, I propose to give the history of in the briefest manner possible.

This claim of the slave States had been asserted, the people of the free States had made a decision in the matter—had expressed their opinions in a manner not to be mistaken or misunderstood, and had elected a large majority of the members of this House, believing them to be hostile to the further extension of slavery under any pretext whatever. Nearly every free State in the Union had passed resolutions on the subject, and with great unanimity, in their respective Legislatures, and all against the further extension of slavery. Under these circumstances, the members of this House met last December—parties from the North divided as usual; the South, while professing to entertain different political sentiments upon other subjects, united upon this—and, in the organization of this House, and especially in the election of an officer exercising a nearly controlling influence, insisting that they would not vote for a man who was not *known* to favor their views. Their record must be right, as they termed it, which meant, that they must have voted when in Congress previously against liberty and in favor of slavery; and with the contest which followed the country is well acquainted. During the voting the most violent language was used, and threats against the Union freely indulged in; at last, in an irregular manner, the friends of slavery extension triumphed, and they found themselves in uncontrolled power in this House. The might of party fear, party pride, and party discipline, triumphed over duty, and this strong outpost was surrendered to the slave power—the presiding officer was elected.

One might reasonably have supposed, sir, that this would have satisfied; but it did not; and by an abandonment (by enough to accomplish the end,) of that party discipline by which they had secured the election of their first officer, they obtained a Clerk from the slave States, also. The power and patronage were now secured, and, for fear of alarming their friends in the North *too much*, they kindly consented that the Sergeant-at-Arms, an officer without influence or patronage, should be taken from a *free* State. After this magnanimous concession was made, another gentleman *from a free State* received a sufficient number of votes to elect him Doorkeeper, but, before the vote was declared, it was ascertained that he was opposed to the extension of slavery, when a sufficient number changed their votes, and defeated his election, and from that time to the present, we have been unable to elect either a Doorkeeper or Postmaster; yet during all this period caucuses were held, in which ultra southern gentlemen participated, to forward their views, while, in the House, it was openly proclaimed by them that this question of slavery extension rose above all party considerations—and their actions were indicative of their sincerity.

After a partial organization, and the appointment of committees in whose hands the interests of slaveholders were considered safe, commenced, not exactly a *reign*, but a *system* of terror; the ball opened with the speech of the honorable gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN,] in which he openly announced the determination of a minority to control the action of a majority of this House and of the people of this Union, by availing themselves of the letter of rules made to facilitate its business, and very modestly told us, that if an attempt was made to thwart their captious career, their opponents should be reduced below a quorum—thus openly threatening, not only the Union, cemented by the blood of the brave men of the Revolution, but the murder of a portion of its Representatives who dared discharge their duty, as they had sworn to do before God and their fellow members. And these denunciations were uttered in a spirit which might be supposed to characterize the honorable gentleman when threatening to chastise a slave. Then followed other speeches in a similar strain, (except the hinted purpose of murder,) by a number of gentlemen from the slave States; all, or nearly all, of whom threatened dissolution at the very least, if their wishes were not gratified in regard to the territories; and they seemed even to glory in thus showing their willingness to commit treason to accomplish their object. At proper intervals, we and the nation were treated to letters, written, the first, if I remember rightly, to the Governor of Georgia, describing the great danger which menaced the South from the action of Congress, a communication from him to the Legislature, and the action of that body thereon, all denouncing the North, and threatening dissolution, with its attendant evils, even if *California* should be admitted as a State. The same ceremony was gone through with by Alabama, by Mississippi, and lastly by Florida, where, I believe, was found a man in the gubernatorial chair, who did not feel at liberty to unite himself or party in this system of intimidation, to give it no harsher name.

For the purpose of still further alarming the North, and of thereby extorting from cowardice what they feared could not otherwise be obtained, the papers at the North in the interest of slavery propagandists, were constantly filled with touching appeals to the fears and cupidity of their readers, until some weak-minded and selfish men were ready to exclaim, "Give up liberty; give up the free soil of California, of New Mexico and of Deseret, to save the Union," or to save a few dollars, which may be lost, if the trade of the South is not retained. Could even the weakest or most selfish of those men have stood by and seen the game played here, as I have seen it from the beginning, they would have despised themselves for their unmanly fears, and unmitigated selfishness. During all this time, scarcely one man from the free States had obtained the floor to meet or repel these threats, and expose these schemes. At length we had, by chance, an opportunity of taking the sense of this House upon the question of applying the Wilmot proviso to the territories, and it was found that there was a majority of eighteen in favor of it. This encouraged the friends of freedom. It looked as though a large majority of the House were disposed to act in accordance with the wishes of those who elected them—to consult the interests of the nation, and regard the rights

of man, rather than take counsel from their fears or hopes of office; but, alas for poor, selfish human nature! the slavery propagandists bid high for the support of northern men, regardless alike of former views upon this subject and former party associations. This brought to the Capitol a distinguished aspirant for Presidential honors, who seemed all at once distressingly alarmed for the safety and stability of the Union; and these fears became contagious in our part of the House. General Cass seemed to have lost caste with his southern friends; his non-intervention doctrines, which most certainly belonged to *him* by right of discovery—or, rather, of invention—had been patented by General Taylor; and they were repudiated, as they are now understood and explained by him, by many, if not nearly all the leading men of the South. This abandonment by those for whom he had avowed sentiments which lost him the Presidency, seemed to leave the coast clear, and the South at liberty to bid for a candidate. The distinguished gentleman to whom I have alluded, proposed the Missouri line, and a great meeting, with, I believe, more names appended to the call than were attached to the Boston letter, was got up in Philadelphia; and, if I remember rightly, some feeble imitations were attempted in other parts of Pennsylvania. At all of these, the most flattering encomiums were passed upon the slaveholders, and the most disparaging epithets applied to northern *fanatics*, as they termed the opponents of slavery extension; and these latter were boldly charged with trampling upon the rights of the South.

Having secured, as was supposed, the Democratic wing of the northern army, they then turned their attention to the Whig side; and when the question again came up upon Mr. Root's resolution, lo! and behold! many gentlemen had received revelations or dreamed dreams, and voted in direct opposition to the former record, or dodged the question. Among the latter was the gentleman from the Suffolk district, in Massachusetts, [Mr. Winthrop] who took great credit as a proviso man from the claim set up that he had manufactured the thunder before the honorable member from Pennsylvania had thought of using it. Had the gentleman from Massachusetts changed his views? If so, why did he not vote against it? if he had not, why did he not, as he had a few days before, vote for it? Why dodge a question of such moment, the rejection or adoption of which was to save or destroy the Constitution of these States? His position, as the acknowledged leader of his party, gave him great influence: was he doing his duty in throwing away that influence? He said in a speech shortly after, that the action of Mr. Root was premature—why then did he favor it at first? Was it not quite as premature when he voted for it, as it was when, a few weeks later, he refused to do so, for the reason, as stated, that the honorable gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Root] was so foolish as to rush in where an angel like himself dared not enter? He took occasion to declare that he considered the vote laying the proviso upon the table, as one of the last importance, and when he judged it safe he dodged his responsibility. Is this the way men ordinarily discharge important public trusts? I am willing to believe that the honorable gentleman really was governed by no other motive for the course he pursued than to punish the honorable gentleman from Ohio for not supporting him when a candidate for the speakership, or to take from him the apology he would have for such neglect in voting. Is not the reason given for the dodge an infinitely better excuse, if the gentleman from Ohio needed one with his constituents, than any vote the gentleman might have given? I have dwelt longer upon this part of my subject than I otherwise should, from the fact, that no member of this House can be made to believe that this evasion was the result of fear for the stability of the Union; for it will be remembered, that, after the House was organized, the honorable gentleman sat by and heard the honorable gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Schenck] eulogize him to the skies for early, steadfast, and devoted attachment to the proviso and its principles. If it was such a mischievous thing, why did he not correct the gentleman, and why did he again dodge the vote upon the resolution reaffirming the Declaration of Independence? Was he fearful of offending his constituents, or the people of New England or any of the free States? What meant this sudden change? Does the honorable gentleman suppose his conduct will escape notice and criticism, because he goes out of his way to ridicule the men who are guilty of the heinous sin of being in favor of freedom rather than slavery—for free rather than slave soil? who have fixed principles, and the manly courage to defend and vote for them, and not skulk from their support in the hour of trial? I will call the attention of the House to another remarkable fact connected with the progress of this question. Not content with instituting invidious comparisons between himself and those in favor of free soil in the House, he turned aside to do his new friends a kind turn, as much as Pilate did to the Jews when he left Paul bound—speaking of a body of men in Boston as a "nest of vipers," because they are the open opposers of tyranny in every form. I believe this remark concerning the friends of liberty in that city, is not original with the honorable gentleman. If my memory serves, Lord North spoke of that particular class in a similarly dignified manner, when he advised George the Third to crush a nest of vipers in the same place. The attempt to carry out this advice was made; the result is a matter of history. I cannot say much in praise of the teeth of their descendants, if they have been destroyed, as the honorable gentleman represents. I do not desire to sit in judgment upon the honorable gentleman from Boston; he is accountable to his constituents, and I entertain no doubt of his ability to obtain the signatures of eight hundred of the wealthiest merchants and mill owners in Boston to a letter endorsing his conduct, and lauding it as perfectly consistent and wonderfully patriotic.

After this scene in the House, and the abandonment of the proviso by its putative father, or at least its grandfather, I confess to have entertained fears for the result.

The next scene in this political drama is worthy the attention of the American people, and deserves their serious consideration. The President communicated to the House his views regarding the territories, and also sent us the constitution of the State of California, which had been made by the people of that distant region under peculiar circumstances, and the most imperious necessity. Into that constitution they had, with the most perfect

unanimity, ingrafted a provision excluding slavery from their new State. For the purpose of doing justice and saving time, the honorable gentleman from Wisconsin [Governor Dotty] offered a resolution in the usual form, instructing the Committee on Territories to report a bill for the admission of the new State into the Union, and moved the previous question. And how was this proposition, so just and reasonable, met by the members from the slave States? By frivolous motions and more frivolous debate, sustained by the Chair, until twelve o'clock at night, when the Chair decided that the day had expired; the resolution went over, and the enemies of free territory triumphed. Where now slept the thunder of the free States? insulted and wronged as they had been. No meetings were called in Philadelphia or elsewhere, to arouse the people to a sense of their danger. Oh, no! the friends of slavery had done this, and of course it would not do to complain, lest their votes might be lost in the next Presidential campaign. Speech making again commenced—paid letter writers again sounded the note of alarm. A few hundred thousand slaveholders would most assuredly dissolve the Union, unless they could be permitted to rule in their own way; the office-seekers, with their presses, took up the cry, and the fiat went forth that freedom *must* give way—slavery extensionists must not be crossed in their wishes or plans. During this time measures were adopted to win over to the side of slavery the last remaining prominent aspirant to the Presidency; and the central organ (the Washington Union) commenced angling for the godlike Senator. The hook, as we all know, was baited with the *highest honor*. Rumors were rife that the gentleman had been waited upon by distinguished southern members of both Houses and both parties, and hopes were freely expressed that he would throw his great influence into their scale, and secure the Union, or rather, the power of the slaveholders. These rumors were not credited by the friends of freedom, but fast crowding events proved their truth. Of the speech of the honorable Senator from Massachusetts, I do not propose to speak, further than to say—it sent a thrill of joy through the hearts of slavery extensionists, and of sorrow and disgust through the hearts of the friends of freedom.

The people of this country are a reading people, and they will judge for themselves whether Mr. Webster has abandoned his post and gone over to the enemy or not. Some may be uncharitable enough, in this connection, to remember Arnold, his great talents, his disappointed ambition, and unsatisfied longings for more extended power, while engaged in the service of his country. They may recollect, perchance, his traitorous compact to obtain the much-desired object—the discovery and capture of his agent—the high-hearted patriotism of John Paulding and his associates, who arrested that agent on the banks of the Hudson, in New York—that *great* State, which was then, is now, and I trust in God, sir, ever will be, ground over which traitors cannot safely pass. These men were poor, but untainted by the thirst for gold or office—could scorn the offered bribe, the *watch*, the purse, and the promises. They may recollect that the memory of these true-hearted patriots is, and ever will be, enshrined in the memory of all firm friends of freedom; while the traitor lives in thought but to infamy and scorn.

I trust in God, sir, that there are yet millions of such men as John Paulding and his two friends, in this glorious Republic, in whose hands the cause of liberty will always be safe.

In the speech of the honorable gentleman from Maryland, [Mr. McLane,] the members of this House were called upon to trample down the Free Soilers! I confess, Mr. Chairman, that I could hardly realize myself in the Congress of the United States when such words fell upon my ear, or that this was claimed as a land of liberty. In justice to the gentleman, however, I ought to say, and it is done with great pleasure, that he omitted those words in his printed speech. I have no doubt, upon cool reflection, he regretted having uttered such sentiments.

Mr. WINTHROP here rose, and interrupted the honorable gentleman, and begged that the honorable gentleman from Connecticut would not misrepresent him.

Mr. CLEVELAND. My speech is written; I shall not have time to deliver it entire; I tender it to the honorable gentleman, in order that he may compare every quotation with *his* printed speech.

Mr. WINTHROP. Does the honorable gentleman intend to say that I called upon the House to trample down the Free Soilers?

Mr. CLEVELAND. I am now alluding to the remarks of the honorable gentleman from Maryland, and I am glad to see that he is *now* present.

Mr. McLANE. I did not intend to call upon the House to trample upon the *persons* of the Free Soilers, but upon the spirit and principle of free soil, and this I stand to now.

Mr. CLEVELAND. I would not have referred to this, but for the purpose of showing the spirit with which the friends of freedom have had to contend. Another honorable gentleman, from Louisiana, [Mr. Morse,] declared in this hall, that had he the power, he would seize and sell every free negro in this country! And yet we are denounced as mad, or as fanatics, because we desire to keep within its present limits an institution which leads the minds of intelligent and highly educated men to such results.

The gentleman from Illinois [Mr. McClernand] has presented a bill to connect with the admission of California territorial governments for New Mexico and Deseret, leaving both those territories open to slavery. Some claim that in those vast regions slavery will never exist, and try to make the nation believe it, when they have daily and hourly, since the commencement of this session, heard southern gentlemen declare that slavery will be carried there as soon as governments are given without the prohibition of slavery. It was but the other day that I heard an honorable Senator from Virginia, [Mr. Mason,] in the presence of Mr. Webster, declare that there was no law of nature or of God which would prevent slaveholders from doing this, and that it was inevitable. For fear of a charge of misrepresentation, I will read an extract from the printed speech of the honorable gentleman:

"We have heard here from various quarters, and from high quarters, and repeated on all hands—repeated here again to-day by the honorable Senator from Illinois, [Mr. Shields,] that there is a law of nature which excludes the southern people from every portion of the State of California. I know of no such law of nature—none whatever; but I do know the contrary, that if California had been

organized with a territorial form of government only, and for which, at the last two sessions of Congress, she has obtained the entire southern vote, the people of the southern States would have gone there freely, and have taken their slaves there in great numbers. They would have done so because the value of the labor of that class would have been augmented to them many hundred fold. Why, in the debates which took place in the convention in California which formed the constitution, and which any Senator can now read for himself, after the provision excluding slavery was agreed upon, it was proposed to prohibit the African race altogether, free as well as bond. A debate arose upon it; and the ground was distinctly taken, as shown in those debates, that if the entire African race was not excluded, their labor would be found so valuable that the owners of slaves would bring them there, even though slavery were prohibited, under a contract to manumit them in two or three years. And it required very little reasoning, on the part of those opposed to this class of population, to show that the productiveness of their labor would be such as to cause that result. An estimate was gone into with reference to the value of the labor of this class of people, showing that it would be increased to such an extent in the mines of California that they could not be kept out. It was agreed that the labor of a slave in any one of the States from which they would be taken was not worth more than one hundred or one hundred and fifty dollars a year, and that in California it would be worth from four to six thousand dollars. They would work themselves free in one or two years, and thus the country would be filled by a class of free blacks, and their former owners have an excellent bargain in taking them there."

And I believe all, or nearly all, who have spoken on the southern side of this question have agreed in saying that, but for the agitation of this subject, California would ere this have been filled with slaves. What then, sir, becomes of this *new* doctrine of non-intervention or non-action? though, truth to say, sir, it is *not* a new doctrine, it was in practice more than eighteen hundred years ago, in the days of our Saviour. We read of an instance where one of earth's unfortunates fell among thieves, who robbed, bruised, and left him nearly dead. A priest chanced that way, looked at, *could* relieve him, but *would* not, as he was a believer in the doctrine of *non-intervention*. A *Levite* also passed; no help came from that quarter, however, as *his* creed was *non-action*.

Sir, permit me to say, the proof is clear and conclusive that, but for the agitation of those men designated by the honorable gentleman from Boston as vipers, and by others called miserable fanatics, over the immense regions of California would have waved the black flag of slavery. How thankful to God those fearless patriots ought to be, that he has used them as instruments in his hands to secure liberty to a territory large enough for an empire. But for their self-sacrificing devotion to liberty, what thousands, aye, millions of poor Africans would have wasted their lives in those mines, to add to the wealth of their lordly masters. But, let gentlemen call them by what names they please—let the spirit of party and selfishness be invoked to crush them,—they are entwining a wreath of laurels around their brows, more unfading and more to be desired than ever encircled that of the most successful and fortunate of earth's warriors—a wreath which will not fade, without a stain of blood upon, or the groan of a bondman in it; it will grow brighter and brighter as ages pass, for the smile of God is upon it.

Again, let not gentleman deceive themselves. All who vote for territorial bills without a proviso against slavery therein, are voting directly to establish slavery, and perpetuating it in those territories. Do they hope or flatter themselves that they will be able to make the intelligent men they represent believe, after slavery has possession there, that they acted innocently in the matter? Let gentlemen from the free States, who were elected for the purpose of opposing this great wrong, and who are now about yielding their judgment to the will and wishes of men highly esteemed, who have changed their position and views upon this subject, remember, that they and all of us will soon stand at the bar of that great Judge, where no apologies will be received—that party, party leaders, or party advantages required of us to stifle the convictions of our consciences, and leave the poor negro to perish of stripes and sores at the rich man's gate. For our instruction is the parable recorded—let us not imitate Dives, or dare his fate. I consider slavery a crime in the sight of God, and believing that, no earthly consideration will prevent my opposing its extension.

But, gentlemen say, the Union will be dissolved if we do not give up this free territory to slavery! What a threat! and what does it imply?—that George Washington and the men who suffered and died to purchase liberty, as was supposed, were merely endeavoring to throw off the British yoke, that they might, in the sacred name of Liberty, consign millions upon millions of their fellow beings to hopeless bondage, whips, chains, and death. To infidels and atheists I make no appeal, but to all those who pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in Heaven, I do, and kindly ask them if they believe that slavery exists in Heaven? How can you love God whom you have not seen and hate your brother whom you have seen, and prove it by voting for the extension of a system which robs the mother of her children, and severs all the holiest and dearest ties of our nature? How Christian-like the sentiment of the honorable gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. STANLY,] that "he would not represent a constituency who raised human beings to sell, as the beasts of the field are sold!" It was a noble thought and nobly uttered; nobler far for the moral courage he manifested in giving it utterance in this hall; and yet, sir, the inevitable result of the extension of slavery, is to provide a market for slaves, and keep up a system at which humanity shudders. Public meetings and the press in the free States to a great extent are urging upon us to aid in perpetuating this monstrous injustice for fear the Union will be dissolved. Am I to do this wrong because my neighbor threatens injury to my property if I refuse? If I do, sir, I am a coward, unworthy to represent freemen! We are told, also, that, unless we yield to this unrighteous claim we shall lose caste with *our party*. Sir, if I believed there was a party in Connecticut which was thus unjust and craven, to which I belonged, I should loathe the connection. But, sir, there is not. I do not believe ten men can be found in Connecticut who will say they are in favor of the extension of slavery, and not *very* many who will expect me to be frightened by idle threats of disunion. Connecticut furnished her full quota of the blood and treasure which purchased the liberty of this country, and the sons of her early patriots will not disgrace their sires by taking counsel of their fears, and yielding their judgment to menaces. The men of Connecticut were the first to engage in the unequal struggle at Bunker Hill, and, sir, they were the last to leave the army. Their bones are to be found beneath the sod of every battle-field of the

Revolution, and their blood moistened every spot where hostile armies met. And, sir, some of her distinguished sons have recently given abundant evidence, on the well-fought fields of Mexico, that the courage and patriotism of the fathers still lives in their descendants. But, sir, Connecticut hates *slavery*, the name and the thing; and although she will stand by the Constitution, and trench upon *no* rights secured to any section of this Union by that instrument, yet will she not surrender *her's* and see humanity trampled in the dust, through base fear of threats made here or elsewhere. She speaks in this hall by her Representatives, and, although her members may differ politically, we do not differ upon this question, neither do we differ from our constituents. Could I be made to believe the reverse, I would resign my seat instantly, and leave this hall, for, sir, I would not change my opinions and action on this question of human liberty for any office in the power of man to bestow.

A word more, sir, upon this subject of disunion. I have no fear of it. Were individuals in the slave States to attempt such a proceeding, we should have nothing to do but to let the *people* of those States settle it among themselves, and I should entertain no fears of the result. The friends of the Union would speedily triumph over its enemies, and send men to this hall who would never again talk of disunion as a remedy for fancied evils.

The only effect of the *proposed* convention at Nashville, if *held*, will be to place the Democratic party—that noble party which has done so much for the glory, honor, and interest of this country—in the same condition which a similar convention, held in Hartford in 1815, placed the Federal party of that day; it will prove a second edition, that is all! No harm will, or *can* come of it. Let not northern men be alarmed or influenced in their action here by *that* humbug.

We have, in this hall, sir, the portraits of Washington and La Fayette, apparently looking down upon us. May we not fancy the latter pointing to his beloved France, and with exultation saying, "no slave's foot presses her soil! the first act of that Republic was to strike the shackels from the limbs of the bondman!" while the great and good Washington is witnessing our deliberations, and seeing the Union for which he suffered and sacrificed so much, threatened by his own beloved Virginia, unless she can be permitted to convert territory, which even the miserable, semi-barbarous Mexicans made free, into a market for slave breeders. But I will not dwell upon this unpleasant subject.

I have heard much, very much, said about northern aggression, but I have listened to hear the specifications and looked to see the proofs, in vain. Has the North refused to allow you to extend your limits by the admission of nine new slave States—thereby allowing you to increase your slaves from a few hundred thousands at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, to three millions now? Have we aggressed upon your rights by allowing you the control of this Government for half a century, and the quiet possession of almost all the offices of profit or honor in its gift? Have we aggressed by doing your bidding all this time, or have we of the free States ever denied you anything you asked?

You say the slaves are the happiest three millions of laboring people in the world! If so, why do they leave you at every opportunity, and seek a refuge among strangers? and when they find they have lost by their exchange of condition, why do they not return? If they are wretched in bondage, why, as Christians, do you not give them their liberty?

I deny that the free States have failed to do *anything* that the Constitution and the decision of the Supreme Court requires them to do; and is it just or reasonable in you to charge us with a violation of the Constitution, because we do not go *beyond* its requirements, and those of the Supreme Court, and legislate in the different States to give you additional facilities above what are written in the bond? The unfeeling *Jew* was confined to *his* bond,—that bond, allowing only one *pound* of flesh, was construed in favor of humanity; and shall not *that* be so construed which gives the *entire* body? The Jew lost his money by being too selfish and exacting; and permit me to say, sir, that, in my opinion, the South are in great danger from the same cause.

While you are bringing this charge against the free States, do not the statute laws of several of your own violate the privileges secured to all citizens of those States, of whatever color, by that same Constitution? Do they not authorize the imprisonment of citizens of other States, for a longer or shorter period, merely because they are Africans, or of African descent? Are not these laws frequently put in force; and is not all legal redress denied the citizen whose rights are thus trampled upon, and feelings outraged? Would it not be well for you, gentlemen, before spending breath in preaching morals to us, to correct your own errors, and repeal your laws, made in open, direct, and flagrant violation of the Constitution and the rights of man? Would it not help your vision, if you should remove the beam from your own eyes, before struggling longer to pull the mote from your brother's?

I charge the *South* with aggressing upon the *North* by every addition of slave territory since the adoption of the Constitution. You have thereby deprived us of the free States of that equal share in the representation in this House, to which, upon every principle of justice, we were entitled. I charge you with aggression upon us by the laws to which I have alluded; by your constant efforts to stir up angry feelings between the two sections of this Republic; by urging your demand upon us to deliver up your fugitive slaves, which have been increased by your increase of slave territory; by demanding the passage of an act which will render insecure the liberty of many citizens of the free States, making their liberty depend upon a great number of petty officers, some of whom might feel they were doing God service in surrendering a negro to a southern claimant, and who would be wholly irresponsible for the act; in pursuing the course you have at this session in order to force slavery into territories now free, and where the present inhabitants do not wish it, thereby disturbing the peace and quiet of the nation; and, above all, I charge you with agression upon the rights of the North in extending slavery, thereby extending our obligations to peril our lives in suppressing insurrections among your slaves.

But it is said we are in favor of abolishing slavery and the slave trade in this District, and

thereby give just cause of offence to the South, and endanger the Union. Since I have been in this city, I have been repeatedly called upon to aid by money contributions to relieve some poor creature confined in that loathsome jail, called the slave pen, preparatory to being sent from home and friends to the far South. And quite recently, sir, an honest, intelligent-looking negro called at my room to solicit aid to enable him to buy his wife, who, he said, was in the pen, and unless he could raise the sum of five hundred dollars, would be sold South, never more to see or be seen by her husband. The man was free, his wife a slave, and in that pen is that wife imprisoned. Is it *strange* that we of the North should feel it our duty to do all in our power to break down a traffic in human flesh in this District, when it produces such results as these? That pen, sir, stands comparatively near both to this Capitol and the President's mansion, and within a stone's throw almost of the Smithsonian Institution, established by a lover of freedom to diffuse knowledge among men. Would to God it could diffuse a knowlege of human rights among the members of this Congress, so that they would abolish the infamous traffic which makes that pen necessary.

Could the President of these United States and members of Congress have a realizing sense of that poor creature's anguish of heart, (and I doubt not there are thousands of such cases,) it does seem, sir, that they would at once unite to abolish this system, alike cruel to the slave and derogatory to the character of this nation. I view this traffic as unjust, sinful, and disgraceful; and whatever *I* can do to abolish it, shall most cheerfully be done, and *I* shall feel that in doing so, a favor is done to all sections of the Union as well as the slave.

It is said, sir, by the South, that they must have a part of the free territories as an outlet for their surplus slaves, as they multiply much faster than the whites, and if circumscribed within their present limits, will by and by become so numerous as to endanger the existence of the latter. This was said by a highly-esteemed and learned friend from Virginia [Gov. McDowell] in the last Congress, and said in the most eloquent manner. It has been often repeated here. This is a claim which deserves our serious consideration, as I do not know of any one here or elsewhere who, while he secures the rights of the blacks, wishes to do it at the hazard of the lives of the white race.

If this is true of the present fifteen slave States, will it not be equally true of the territories and of fifty slave States? If this claim is well-founded, what a frightful picture does it present to the imagination, when we allow ourselves to look into the future! All will agree, I think, that slavery must *ultimately* find its utmost limits; and when those are reached, if the curse continue, what earthly power can prevent the ultimate extinction of the white race by the blacks? The evil is now within our control, and shall we, to secure a few millions of money, bequeath to our children an inheritance of blood like the scenes at St. Domingo, and upon a scale so large as to make the brain dizzy and the heart sick to contemplate it?

Our fathers shed their blood and offered up their lives to purchase, as they supposed, an inheritance richer than all the mines of earth—an inheritance of liberty. Shall we imitate their example, or shall we, with selfishness the most inexcusable, rush on, with our eyes open, to the certain fate which awaits us or our posterity? Shall I be told there is no remedy? Let me suggest one: instead of the effort you are making to extend and perpetuate a system alike prejudicial to your honor and interests, as well as ours, ask the free States to agree with you to an amendment of the Constitution, so as to enable the Government, instead of wasting millions of money and thousands of lives in acquiring territory for the spread of this institution, to use that money in aid of some safe and well-devised scheme of emancipation; and my word for it, sir, the proposition would be hailed with joy by every free State in this Union! And what a glorious spectacle we should then present to the eyes of the world!—a free, happy, prosperous, and just people, striving together to wipe out the only blot upon our fair fame as a nation. Let the Africans be colonized in some suitable place, and let us make the only amend in our power for the injuries we have inflicted upon that unhappy race. This course would remove the great, the only source of evil and danger to our beloved country. We should then meet in this Capitol as a band of brothers, not striving to gain some sectional advantage, but rather to do each other good, and rejoicing in the common, the unembarrassed prosperity and happiness of our whole people. By this course we could transmit to our children the rich inheritance bequeathed to us by our fathers, and by our example ultimately overthrow all of earth's tyrants.

In conclusion, I am bound to say, that if this system of slavery extension and slavery aggression is to be persevered in, the free States will not submit to it. If bills are passed at this time allowing it, and slavery is extended into territory now free, those territories, as *States*, will never be admitted into this Union. Politicians may truckle, office-seekers may compromise, slaveholders may threaten; but the people, the fearless, liberty-loving people of this great Republic will discard their faithless servants, and send to this hall and the other end of the Capitol, men who know their rights and the interests of this nation, and knowing, dare maintain them.

During the first stormy debate in this house, a gentleman from the South said, "*We'll teach the North.*" A friend of mine in this city wrote a few lines upon hearing that threat, which I will read:

"*You'll* teach the North! Aye, teach her what?
Has Bunker Hill forgot her dead?
Is Lexington an unknown spot,
On which the churls of ign'rance tread?
Is Faneuil's holy hall a tomb
Of buried thoughts and deeds unknown?
And Plymouth! does she sleep in gloom,
And scorn the Pilgrim's stepping-stone?

"You'll teach the *North!* Aye, teach her what?
To bow before your haughty will,
To choose the menial's humble lot,
And at your simple *nod* be still!
To shame her father's bones with fear—
To cower behind their hallow'd graves!
As well might you, in their career,
Control the Ocean's giant waves!

"She gives you life—she feeds your pride,
She makes you strong in danger's hour;
She stands a brother, by your side,
To laugh to scorn the spoiler's power!
Then teach her not with angry mien,
Then chafe her not with idle words;
She stands like her old hills, serene,
And for her foes reserves her swords!

"*You'll teach* the North! Her spindles ring
With downy seeds from southern plains—
Her labor makes your reapers sing,
And richly pays for all their pains!
She loves you still! Her children know
Your fathers' deeds of deathless fame;
When North and South opposed the foe,
And gained a country and a name!

"Then *teach* the *North* to love the plains,
Where sleep in blood her gallant dead;
Teach her to make more bright the chains
That link in one each sovereign head!
Ask not from her to basely bow,
And, like a spaniel, lick *your* rod,
She wears *your laurel* on her brow,
And master, she has *none*, but GOD!"

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